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## THE SPECIAL STAFF.

THE remarkable development of telegraphic facilities within the last few years, and more especially since the telegraph system of the kingdom passed under the management of the Post-office, has exercised a curious influence on daily journalism generally, and perhaps an exceptionally remarkable influence on that department of daily journalism which embraces 'special correspondents.' Not very long ago, the 'special correspondent' sent down to the provinces to write 'descriptive' about any event or occurrence, had a comparatively easy time of it. It mattered little whether he wrote with a swift pen, or in protracted pain and anguish. He might linger over a late dinner, and then sit down with equanimity to elaborate his sentences with all imaginable leisure, in contented realisation of the impossibility of transmitting his 'copy' in time for the newspaper of the following morning. Telegraphic facilities rudely broke in upon the pleasant dilettanteism of the 'specials.' These facilities became so widely extended, that there came to be hardly any place in Britain so remote whence, or from somewhere more or less adjacent, it was not possible to transmit telegraphic intelligence. There was an interval of competition between laconic telegrams recording bare facts, and the freer-handed 'descriptive' of the 'specials,' and for a little it seems as if the telegraph system was discounting special correspondence. But the 'specials' rallied, and subdued their rival into being their slave. They ploughed with their enemy's heifer, betaking themselves to the transmission of their 'descriptive' by telegraph, no matter how long it might be. The price of the triumph is costly. For the 'special correspondent' there is no longer dalliance over a late dinner, or a nap to refresh himself before commencing to write. His work is done now at the very acme of high-pressure speed. Eating, ease, or sleep alike must be disregarded by the 'special correspondent' who cares for his own credit and that of the journal which he represents. He must be able to write graphically faster than most clerks can copy, else

he may as well retire from a profession for which he is unsuited. His bodily endurance and energy must keep pace with his mental vigour; he cannot afford to have a digestion, and the best preliminary training he can undergo is a full course of gymnastics, including equitation, and the ability to do without sleep.

The autobiography of some of the most enterprising and energetic of our special correspondents would make a volume more interesting than many a novel. I know one of the fraternity who, during the illness of the Prince of Wales, set himself to demonstrate the possibility of transmitting from King's Lynn, for his journal of the same morning, a statement of the Prince's condition at 1 A.M. Between Sandringham and Lynn there were eight miles of tortuous road, covered with several inches of snow, and the nights were pitchy dark. The man I refer to persuaded his colleagues to share in the effort, and he did his own driving, his comrades being inside the carriage. As one rang from the stable tower of Sandringham, the carriage started. There were white faces inside when it halted at a quarter to two at the door of the Lynn post-office, but the end was gained; and one o'clock telegrams continued to be forwarded by the same machinery till the Prince was out of danger. The Autumn Manœuvres of the present year tried to the utmost the endurance of the 'special correspondents' engaged in chronicling them. The brief diary of one of them is before me now. One day's entry holds good as regards the six in which the operations between the Wiley and the Avon were going on. 'Rose at half-past five, breakfasted, mounted at half-past six, rode from Salisbury to Wiley, fourteen miles, reached field of action, and rode about it continuously till four; rested half an hour; rode back to Salisbury; worried some food; wrote for the wire two and three-quarter columns; two glasses of whisky and water; bed at one.'

When Lord Lorne brought the Princess Louise to the ancestral home of the Campbells in the autumn of last year, a special correspondent successfully telegraphed to a London newspaper of the same morning the names of the leading persons

who stood up in a quadrille which was not danced till half-past 1 A.M.; with a wet walk of a mile and a half between the ballroom and the telegraph office.

But the object of this paper is not to describe the exploits of special correspondents, but the machinery by which alone such feats are practicable. They would have to fall back on the post-office or the parcel-train service, if it were not for the telegraphic facilities afforded them through the instrumentality of 'the special staff.' Columns on columns of 'copy,' detailing occurrences, speeches, sporting events, and news generally of to-day, are transmitted by telegraph in time for the papers of to-morrow, solely through the exertions of 'the special staff.'

The first time I ever met the man I am about to describe was at a race-meeting rather more than two years ago. A slender, middle-sized man, without an ounce of spare flesh upon him, with a face of such intense razor-like keenness, that I made sure he was a Yankee, till he opened his mouth, when I knew him in an instant for a Scot. He seemed ubiquitous, and gave me the idea of being a peripatetic galvanic battery, that scintillated sparks of energy wherever he shewed himself. There was a shed in the rear of the stand, and in this shed about a dozen telegraphists were operating as if their lives depended on their speed. Other officials were taking in the messages, which the sporting journalists and betting-men, having written them at the loopholes, against the walls, on their hats, or on each other's backs, were showering in just after the decision of an important race. Over the whole busy scene hovered the lean, sharp-faced man of the galvanic energy. He did what he liked with the betting-men, who, rough, intractable beings as they are generally, were as wax in his hands. Accumulations of messages melted before him; embarrassed clerks appealing to him in a difficulty were put straight with a word; if an instrument got out of gear, he restored it to efficiency, *ipso manu*, with dexterous celerity; if an operator's fingers grew so utterly weary that he could no longer ply them, this man grasped the knob of the vacated instrument, and wired the fastest of any operator in the place. I saw him again a little before midnight, when I brought to the office in the town a long special message to be wired. Long press telegrams—columns of them in a single quarter of an hour—were pouring in for London, Birmingham, Manchester, Newcastle, Liverpool, Edinburgh, and Glasgow. He, the general, was there, indomitably energetic as when I saw him in the forenoon, carrying out, to the most involved ramification, the well-arranged tactics that alone could have mastered a mass of work so vast. I have seen him often since—never without his suggesting to me the idea of energy almost painfully intense. I cannot help believing that it is maintained only as the outcome of a chronic surcharge of electricity.

This man is the founder, the elaborator, and the present chief of 'the special staff,' the department of the postal telegraph system by which alone those rushes and floods of telegraphic work, every day becoming commoner, on account of the increased facilities, can be coped with. 'The special staff' consists of men picked from the whole array of telegraphists for special capabilities. The special

staff man must be an accomplished operator, to whom no instrument comes amiss; he must be enough of an engineer to be able to make alterations or correct blemishes in the working of wires; he must carry in his head the telegraphic chart of the country; he must be a strategist, in a sense, so that if over-accumulation of work threatens to bar the direct advance, he may contrive a flanking movement in aid—in other words, devise a round-about circuit with the same termination as has the direct wire. If he has, for instance, but one wire available for Scotland direct, and it overfull, his knowledge of the resources at his command suggests to him additional, if circuitous methods of transmission to Scotland, one *via* London, another, it may be, *via* Bristol. To the special staff, homes are a superfluity; its members gyrate about the country like so many methodical Wills-o'-the-wisp. To one working steadily at Salisbury, there enters the chief—'M——, there will be three thousand words to be telegraphed from Golspie to-morrow night. Finish the message you're on, and start; there's a train in an hour and a quarter.' The next night but one, M—— is on his stool again at Salisbury, having returned from Golspie, in the extreme north of Scotland, after having telegraphed some three thousand words, and travelled some twelve hundred miles, in rather less than forty-eight hours.

The special staff know as much about newspaper work as the press-men whose work they transmit. They know up to what o'clock each London 'daily' can take 'copy,' and, I fancy, have a fair notion, gathered from results, of the respective subeditorial idiosyncrasies and abilities. In a manner, they aid in subediting themselves; for it is the commonest thing in the world for the operator to insert a word obviously omitted by neglect, and to bring to the notice of the writer a sentence that will not make sense, or which contains repetition. The special staff are as skilled in the decipherment of bad caligraphy as is a clever compositor, and they require to be so, for they sometimes get fearful pothooks and hangers. There is a special correspondent who cannot read his own writing; but there is a man on the special staff who can make it out, and wherever the former goes, if the department can possibly arrange it, the latter goes too. The special staff must understand the phraseology and contractions of the press generally—of racing, boating, cricket, and numerous other specialties—must be able to sleep as well in a railway carriage as in a bed, and must know how to combine the *suaviter in modo* with the *fortiter in re*.

The nucleus of the special staff was originally formed out of the instructing staff, who, under the superintendence of the present chief of the former organisation, Mr R. W. Johnston, trained the large body of post-office assistants throughout the kingdom for telegraphic work. It consists of a controller, two superintendents, three assistant-superintendents, five first and five second class operators, and an inspector of the travelling telegraph office. On occasions of heavy pressure, such as at Doncaster, in the Leger week, or during the recent Autumn Manœuvres, when a very large force of operators is required, it is assisted by the most skilful ordinary hands, selected from the neighbouring offices; but the arrangements are always in the hands of the special staff, whose members

supersede, *ad hoc*, the local authorities. It is pleasant to know that an organisation so useful contributes also not immaterially to the national revenue. The charge of the special staff, including the travelling expenses of the travelling office, and of special offices at race-courses, is less than six thousand pounds a year; while its earnings for the present year are calculated to exceed fifteen thousand pounds. There is no cessation of work for the special staff, no matter what the season of the year. The week from the 3d to the 8th of June, intervening between the Derby and the Ascot meeting, is known among its members as the 'rest week,' because in it there is generally rather less high-pressure work than at other times. The following is a list of the work attended to by the special staff during the 'rest week' this summer: Oldham election, Dorchester agricultural show, Liberal banquet at Bath, Prince of Wales at Yarmouth, four race-meetings, and three cricket-matches. Let me take the work done in the week ending to-day—I am writing on the 2d November—as a fair sample of the ordinary hebdomadal toil of the special staff. The following are the engagements fulfilled: Mayor's banquet at Ripon, Prince of Wales at Six-Mile-Bottom, Sir John Packington at Stourbridge, Mr A. Peel at Warwick, Earl Granville at Ramsgate, Cutlers' Feast at Sheffield, Agricultural meeting at Sittingbourne; Worcester, Lincoln, and West Drayton race-meetings. At some of the political gatherings, as many as twenty newspaper columns of matter for the press have to be telegraphed in a single night, the provincial press often making even greater demands on the wires than do the metropolitan journals.

The actuating principle of the postal telegraph system generally, as reconstituted by Mr Scudamore, is, to gain the approbation of the public by meeting its requirements; and this principle is found to result equally in popularity and in profit. It is especially acted upon in the dispositions of the special staff. Journalism may be said in a sense to represent the general public, and the accommodation of journalists is specially studied. Local post-offices, with the best will in the world, could not hope to cope with journalistic requirements on special occasions. At Inverary, the ordinary telegraphic facilities are represented by an A B C instrument and the 'Dougal Cratur,' a Celtic youth of engaging manners, and strong disinclination to have his hair cut. When Lord Lorne brought home Princess Louise the summer before last, there converged upon Inverary from London, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee, Leeds, Manchester, and elsewhere, a serried array of special correspondents, whose advent occasioned in the 'Dougal Cratur' mental prostration of a suicidal tendency. But he rallied perceptibly, when there came to his succour the chief of the special staff, with three trusty henchmen. Instruments of the latest construction temporarily superseded the old A B C; circuits were established direct with all the leading towns in the empire. The operators had an arduous week of it, for in five days something like a hundred thousand words were sent through the submarine cable which crosses Loch Fyne; but they made head successfully against the avalanche of work by dint of sheer, sleepless energy. They bivouacked with their instruments in a wash-house at the back of the post-office, with one bed between the three;

but, indeed, it was very little time they had for spending in bed.

At the Scott Centenary in Edinburgh, I found the special staff wiring furiously in a pen partitioned off the banqueting-room. They stood to their work in two inches of water, for it was the ice-room, and ice-masons were hacking and hewing among the melting blocks, as the operators moved their swift fingers. The indomitable chief swayed his energetic rule from a coign of vantage which he had assumed on the top of a miniature iceberg, but the temperature of his pedestal seemed to have no influence whatever on the *perferendum ingenium*. Change the scene to Salisbury, when the Autumn Manœuvres were going on. In a shed at the back of the postmaster's house, twenty operators are silently pegging away. It is midnight, and they began six hours ago, but still the 'copy' is rolling in. 'Five thousand words still to come in from Wiley from the *Times*.' 'Is the *Scotsman* copy begun on yet?' 'Boy, run up and see whether Mr Forbes has any more ready.' 'The Blind Clerk himself couldn't make it out; you'll have to go and ask Mr Henty to go over it with you himself.' 'Warn Glasgow for a long message.' 'No, you can't knock off; be ill to-morrow morning if you like.' Such are a few of the short sharp orders and instructions I overhear, as I stand smoking in the postmaster's back yard. During the Autumn Manœuvres, there were telegraphed of press messages over half a million words. A telegram to headquarters from a journalist suffices to bring a member of the special staff to the most out-of-the-way place. Not long ago, a special correspondent happening to be in the Black Country, heard of an event that was to occur three days after, which seemed to him worth description by telegraph. The people at the local post-office, when he called there, did not understand what he wanted, and developed extensive woodenness. He wrote to headquarters, intimating that he might, on the contingency of being on the spot, have a message to be telegraphed on such-and-such a night, and requesting that the local people should be instructed to afford facilities. The correspondent went away, and did not return to the Black Country town till half an hour before the commencement of the affair he wished to describe. As he alighted at the hotel door, there was quietly leaning against it a member of the special staff. On the chance of there being a column to be telegraphed, and rather than that disappointment should be caused, this gentleman had been specially detached from a race-meeting on the other side of England; and the work done, he caught a night-mail, and was in harness next night somewhere on the borders.

The journalist who has it in intention to have extensive dealings with the special staff, need not incommode himself by carrying about with him a large stock of bullion. All London newspapers, and most provincial ones, have now a bank-account with the department, and are furnished with cheque-books, which entitle their representatives not to draw out money, but to forward messages without personal payment, and without the delay of preliminary counting. The process is the simplest in the world. The journalist having written his message—it is immaterial whether on paper specially furnished for use by the department or on his own 'slips'—hands or sends it in,

having first pinned to it a 'pass' torn out of the book he carries. This pass names the journal on account of which the book has been issued, and has printed on it the stipulation that messages containing more than two hundred words are not franked by those passes without a day's notice having been given, 'or unless the office at which they are tendered possesses the means of forwarding them without delaying the messages of the public.' The rate of payment for press messages is, I understand, one shilling for seventy-five words before six P.M.; and one shilling for one hundred words after that hour, when there generally comes a lull in the influx of public messages. The requirements of the press associations and other organisations of a similar kind are met by the provision, that any number of copies of the same message, 'whether sent to the same or any other town than the original,' are forwarded at the rate of twopence per seventy-five or one hundred words (as the case may be) for every copy. A similar provision, modified in its details, exists as to duplicates of 'public messages.'

The special staff department, regarding itself as a mercantile concern, whose duty it is to earn money, has given its attention largely, and with the most successful financial results, to developing telegraphic facilities at the various race-meetings. Constant additions are being made to these facilities. Newmarket Heath is now laced with a network of wires. Messages are now forwarded direct from the betting-ring, and from the July course on the further side of the ditch. There is a large office in the town with 'writing spaces' for over thirty persons; there is another at the back of the Cesarewitch stand, and another at the top of the town near the Cambridgeshire finish. This year, at the Newmarket Houghton meeting, the business done reached thirteen thousand messages; at the Doncaster St Leger meeting it amounted to twelve thousand messages. For the first time last summer was there direct telegraphic communication from Goodwood race-course. The Duke of Richmond, in whose park is the course, had persistently declined to allow the introduction of the wires, and the service was effected by a flying cohort of runners between the race-course and the Chichester post-office. But His Grace yielded this year to the project of a cable, to be laid for the meeting, and coiled up again when it was over; and accordingly, the click of the instruments was heard hard by that beautiful lawn over which the beeches throw their cool green shade. The cable at the race-course end came home into the 'Travelling Telegraph Office,' the newest enterprise of the special staff. This office on wheels—the design of the controller of the special staff—carries its own instruments, batteries, and general paraphernalia of an office in full work. It can be set to work in less than half an hour, and disconnected and removed in less time. It travels by road or by rail, pays out its own cable from under the boot as it goes, and in the oracular words of one of the staff, 'it has been slept in.' It was first used at the university boat-race of the year, and has since been at Windsor, Henley regatta, Canterbury in the cricket-week, Lord's, Bedford, Leicester, Newmarket, &c. It stood outside Bemerton Lodge during the Autumn Manœuvres, for the accommodation of the Prince of Wales, who accepted a photograph of it. Royalty and the special staff

are no strangers. One of its members is always with the Queen, another with the Prince of Wales. During His Royal Highness's illness, there were two at Sandringham, engaged in the most exhaustive duties; and on his recovery, the Prince presented both with a pretty souvenir of their devotion to their arduous work during a crisis so trying.

## MURPHY'S MASTER.

### CHAPTER III.—MULVANEY'S.

THE rest of their journey was soon ended: Murphy stopped at an inn, where he saw the mare rubbed down and fed, with his own eyes, ere he took his young companion to the lodgings hard by, which Kavanagh had indicated. Mulvaney's was an eating-house of humble exterior, situated in a secluded street, whereof the houses were old and gabled, and mostly built of wood: a piece of streaky bacon and some potatoes appealed to hungry stomachs in the ground-floor window; while above, the words 'Good Beds' addressed themselves to tired limbs. The inside of this house, which modestly drew back a little from its neighbours, was of more pretension than the outside: though the rooms were small—with the exception of the public one, which was divided into boxes, shining with grease and age—they were very numerous, and wainscoted with oak. Most persons finding it in so humble a place, would have taken this panelling for discoloured deal, but Chesney, familiar with timber, knew better, and marvelled at it. The staircase was of the same material, its steps broad and shining: its balustrades curiously carved with fruit and flowers, though these were hardly discernible for the dirt that begrimed them. The mansion had doubtless been the residence of some rich and thrifty citizen in the olden time; it had been the pride of some Dame Margery to keep the oak well polished, and to see that the sleeping-rooms smelled of dried lavender. But Dame Margery had been dead these hundred years and more; and if Widow Mulvaney, who reigned in her stead, had a preference for any odorous herb above another, it was for onions.

The smell of onions always arising from the kitchen, like a perpetual incense, pervaded the whole establishment, which was impregnated with it. You might have taken a square inch of wood-work in the spring-time from any part of the interior of the house, carried it to the Land's End, and stuck it up there for a windy summer, then placed it in a chest of ottar of roses for the winter, and in the spring again, when you took it out, your nose should tell you still: 'This came from Mulvaney's.' You might steep, you might shatter the wood at your will, but the scent of those onions would cling round it still. They were the chief ingredient in that Irish stew to which the frequenters of Mulvaney's (who were all from the Emerald Isle) were so patriotically partial. Even at the early hour at which our travellers arrived under this hospitable roof, the grateful perfume was stealing up the kitchen-stairs, and renewing its powers everywhere. Only one chamber, as in the case of Bluebeard's wife, was denied to it. At the back of the great eating-room was a smaller apartment, used, probably, in ancient times, as the citizen's own parlour, from whence he could keep his eye upon the 'prentices in the shop; but now



set apart as a withdrawing-room for smokers : here the smell of tobacco and the reek of whisky devoured, like an Aaron's rod, all other odours.

'We'll breakfast in the smoke-room, tell Mistress Mulvaney,' had been Murphy's first words to the girl who admitted them within-doors; and in this more private chamber, their meal had accordingly been spread. While the travellers were doing ample justice to it, there entered through an inner door the proprietress herself, a stout and rosy-cheeked widow, whom Mr Richard Murphy—rising hastily from his chair, and sweeping the back of his hand across his lips—at once saluted with a very audible kiss.

'Be aisy, Dick,' said she, but so calmly, that the words were robbed of their rebuke, 'and behave yourself before folk. Who is this?'

'A friend of the young master's,' answered Murphy.

'Good! Then he is welcome, as, of course, are you, Dick; though I am sorry to see you *here*.' She looked around her significantly. 'What's the matter now, that you must needs have a room with two doors to it?'

'The very mischief's loose!' said Murphy; 'I mustn't talk about it even to you. There's nothin' agin' myself this time; but Chesney—that's the boy yonder—and me are to be quiet here till we have our orders. Can you put us away up-stairs somewhere?'

'To be sure I can, if it was for a twelvemonth. You shall have the front room, and Biddy shall leave hers, and come to mine—that will give one to the master's friend. It is but an attic, but?—'

'Any place will do for me, ma'am,' interrupted Chesney simply.

'Oh, he ain't a young prince disguised, if that's what you mean,' said Murphy, with a coarse laugh.

'He's a sight better looking, and a deal better spoken, than ever you were, anyway, Mr Imperence!' returned the widow. '—You've been up all night, I reckon, my good lad, and would not be sorry to feel your bed, so I'll see that it is got ready for you.' And off she hurried.

'You'll not take your clothes off, boy, mind that,' said Murphy imperiously. 'Remember what the young master said: that you must be ready for a start at a moment's notice; and you'll hould your tongue, no matter how the widow yonder may blarney you; and you'll swear not to leave this house, neither night nor day.'—

'I shall obey Mr Kavanagh in every particular,' observed Chesney haughtily, and with a strong stress upon the name.

'It will be your better plan, Master Smooth-face, for the hour in which he comes to harm through fault of yours will be your last, as sure as my name's Richard Murphy.'

The colour deepened in the lad's wholesome cheek, and his blue eyes flashed scornfully as he replied: 'I have seen enough of one bully in my life, Mr Murphy, to make me very resolute against putting up with another. I was not afraid of your pistol, when you wanted to murder me for stopping your horse, and saving your life, and I am not afraid of your big words; so you may spare your breath for other purposes than to threaten me. You have laid your ugly hand upon me twice.'—

'And I'll do it a third time, and to some purpose!' cried Murphy, as he rose to put his words

into effect. Chesney also rose, and snatched up a knife from the table.

'This is keeping quiet with a vengeance, Mr Murphy,' exclaimed the widow, re-entering the room at this critical moment, and precipitating herself between the would-be combatants; 'and very pretty treatment of the young master's friend, I'm sure.'

'He's got a knife,' said Dick, abashed and apologetically.

'And quite right too, when he has to deal with a mad dog. Did Master Frank give you orders to beat the lad?'

'No,' said Dick humbly, and resuming his seat. 'I was wrong. I'm sorry.'

'Not half so sorry as you would have been had you laid a finger on me,' cried Chesney angrily.

'Tush, tush, put the steel by, lad,' whispered the widow. 'Dick has not had his whisky this morning, and is not himself. Come, let me shew you your room.'

Robert Chesney picked up his bundle and followed her without even bestowing a glance at his late antagonist.

'You mustn't mind Dick,' said she, confidentially, on their way up-stairs: 'if anybody else had offered to hurt *you*, he'd have flown at them just the same. Here's your sleeping-room, which is but small; but if you want anything, you have only to name it.'

'I should like some ink, if you please,' said the lad; 'that's all.'

'Ink?' answered the widow admiringly. 'What! you can write, can you? Why, Dick couldn't write his name to save his life!'

'Pen and paper I have in my bundle,' observed Chesney; 'it's only ink I want, and the favour of getting my note posted when I've written it.'

'I thought from the first he was one of the quality,' murmured Widow Mulvaney, as she went down-stairs: 'his hair curled so, and he was so soft-spoken, and now he is for writing notes. I wonder whether it will be to his mother, poor lad. He ain't one of our own boys, who fall in love before they are short-coated, or I should say, since he is in such haste, that it must needs be to his sweetheart.'

Weary and travel-stained as he looked, Robert Chesney was indeed a well-favoured youth, very different from the majority of customers with whom Mrs Mulvaney was wont to deal. Though humbly born and rudely bred, he had had the advantage of a good schooling, and took a pride in his personal appearance unusual with those of his own age and position in life. But for the circumstances of a drunken step-father and an unhappy home, he might have risen from being the head pupil of a national school to any pinnacle of parochial greatness; but domestic injustice and tyranny had warped a mind naturally sensitive enough to the claims of authority, and set his feet on a far different path. Of kindness, to which he was but little used, he was very susceptible, and Kavanagh's words and manner had won his heart, at a time peculiarly opportune for making a pact of friendship. Unimpulsive himself, he had been attracted by the other's reckless confidence to a degree that astonished him, as he now reviewed in quiet the stirring events of the past night. It was satisfactory, of course, that within a few hours from his voluntary exile from

his step-father's roof, he should have found a helpful friend, a temporary home; and possibly a career for the future: but what price might he not have to pay for these undoubted advantages? Nay; what price might he not have already paid for them? He had been seen by many in company with one who, even by his own account, had incurred the highest penalty of the law. He did not for a moment believe him to be guilty in a moral sense; his own experience of life, which had somehow placed the sense of justice in opposition to obedience to authority, inclined him to take this view; while Kavanagh himself, independent of his disclaimer, impressed him as being quite incapable of an atrocity; but still his fortunes had evidently become linked with that of a dangerous and desperate man. The measure of precaution that had been taken to insure his new friend's escape from his pursuers, was, to say the least of it, a strong one. If Murphy had not prevented him, he, for his part, it is true, would have given warning of their danger to the hapless patrol, who, for all he knew, had met with their deaths from the fallen tree; but he had not done so, and he was now the willing companion of those who had caused the catastrophe. For all that he had run away from home with nothing beyond what he carried on his back, and with very hazy notions of gaining a livelihood, Robert Chesney was a sensible English lad, who looked matters in the face even when they were serious.

As to breaking the word he had passed to Kavanagh, to keep silence upon his late adventure, that never entered into his mind; but he did ponder with precocious gravity upon the advisability of cutting his new connections altogether. Murphy was abhorrent to him, of course—a brutal copy of his own drunken step-father; but there was this difference: from early association, his relative by marriage had obtained a certain ascendancy over him; until quite recently, indeed, he had never even resisted his correction; but as for this hulking savage (his thoughts were pregnant with unsavoury epithets for him), he did not fear him one whit. His society—so much of it, at least, as would be necessary for him to endure—would, doubtless, be distasteful to him; but his pride revolted against making this a very important item in his calculations. And, on the other hand, he had taken something more than a fancy for Murphy's master. Robert had met with gentlemen, and very grand ones, in his time—magnates of his own and other countries, who had shot in the royal park, under his step-father's guidance, and for whom he had acted as beater or game-bearer; but he had never seen so kindly a face, never heard such gentle tones, as those of Frank Kavanagh. No doubt, the kindness and gentleness had gained by contrast with the moodiness, and even ferocity, he had also exhibited: the self-willed and passionate man has always that advantage over his more equable fellows, that when he does make himself agreeable, it is all the more appreciated, like a clump of trees on a bare moor; and Kavanagh had shewed his genial side only to the boy, his rougher attributes to others. Moreover, he had trusted to his word, just as though he had been a gentleman instead of a poor lad, and that in a matter of the gravest sort. It was a rash and reckless thing to have done in so serious a case, and on so short an acquaintanceship, as the

boy himself could well understand; and this endeared his new friend to him all the more. Lastly, to have his vague plan for the future fashioned for him into some practical shape, would have been very welcome, even had it taken a less attractive guise; and this suggestion of leaving England and seeking his fortune in some far-away region, exactly chimed in with his own longings. But perhaps what, more than aught else, finally decided Robert Chesney to accept, on reflection, the proposal which he had so hastily embraced, was this trifling circumstance: as he stood in the national attitude for reflection, with one hand scratching his head, and the other thrust into his breeches-pocket, the jingle of golden coin fell upon his ear. With the rattle of copper he was familiar, with the chink of silver even he had some acquaintance; but to rub one piece of gold against another had never yet fallen within his own experience. He pulled out the two sovereigns which his patron had given him to make merry with, and gazed on them as an Esquimaux gazes on a clasp-knife, or an Otaheitan woman on a looking-glass.

Hope is cheerful, and ambition is seductive; but the possession of ready-money in the unaccustomed hand, is the realisation of man's brightest dream.

#### CHAPTER IV.—A LOVE LETTER.

Two golden sovereigns to make merry with! He had slipped them into his pocket, taking them for shillings, his attention—to do him justice—being occupied at the time with bidding adieu to the donor; and he had not thought of them since. How profitable should that service be in which such a sum was bestowed as the means of mere amusement! And yet Robert Chesney's mind was not a grasping one, nor even unduly set upon what is misnamed 'the main chance'—as though that could be 'chance' which every man may acquire for himself, if he be prudent or roguish enough; or as if that chance were 'the main' one in which self is alone concerned! No, it was not on his own account that his heart leaped within him at the sight of that golden store, but because it reminded him of one with whom he could instantly share it.

He untied his little bundle, and took from it pen and paper; and standing beside the mantel-piece—for the attic did not boast a table—wrote, in a good clerly hand—Miss Mulvaney having kept her word as to the ink-bottle—the following letter:

MY DARLING LIZZY—Little did I think, when I bade you good-bye last night, that I should have great news to tell you so soon. I have met with a kind friend—whose name, for the present, you must be content to guess at, since he has reasons for its concealment—and I am in hopes he will put me in the way of making my living. I cannot even give you my present address, for he is not at hand to give me leave to do so; and, besides, whether I shall be here even to-morrow is more than doubtful. You are too sensible, I know, to fret, when I tell you that I am going abroad—an uncertain word, you will say, and yet I have nothing to tell you more distinctly—a great way off, my darling—beyond seas. Well, that was my own

wish, you know. Step-father was seldom right in word or deed as respected me, but he spoke truth (I feel) when he used to say that England was no place for a young fellow who would make his way in the world quickly; and I have the sweetest reason—have I not?—to make it quickly. I shall write to you whenever I can. I shall think of you always—of the long summer days (that seemed so short) which we have spent together in the forest glades; I see them now in this place, where there is not a tree; I see the beech-wood by our lodge, with your red cloak glinting through their silver stems; I see the mighty elm in front of your cottage door, nodding to me, as though in farewell. I do not write thus to pain you, you may be sure, but to convince you that I am still with you in my thoughts. Enough of myself. I conclude nothing has occurred within these few hours to you, though so much has happened to me. It was a comfort to remember that the wind would blow the elm away from your roof, not on it. You will be talking of nothing but the gale to-day—I mean your mother and James will be doing so. Then, about eleven (it is only seven o'clock when I write this), step-father will come in with the news that I have left home. Then you will look surprised (little hypocrite!), and your mother will weep, I know. God bless her! I fear there are hard times approaching for her. James will never get your poor father's place, unless he is more careful: I know he is suspected of poaching. It seems hard, in a land where so much is inherited, to have been left nothing but a taste, in which we are forbidden to indulge. If any opening should occur for him where I am going, I will let him know. I need not tell you to credit nothing that step-father says of me; but see your mother is not misled: I should be loath, indeed, to lose the good opinion of one who has been so kind to me. A time may come when I may repay it; and, Lizzy, darling, I believe it will. I noticed yesterday how thin her shawl was got: give her this sovereign, with my dear love, to buy her a warmer one this Christmas-tide. When she looks at it, she will remember me; and before the remembrance is worn out—who knows!—I may come home—I mean to your home—to remind her of myself in person. How did I get it? Well, never mind; it was honestly come by. And don't think that I need it. There has been already a drizzle of sovereigns upon me; and if it should come on to pour, in the tropics somewhere, I shall hold out my hat, turn up my umbrella (a palm-leaf) the wrong way, and get thoroughly soaked; then come back to England to be dried. Since you may like to know where I have kissed this paper, I make a mark: I already feel your lips there, and tremble. How grown you will be when I see you next! but you will never be more beautiful in my eyes, for that is impossible. I have got your sampler, with *Trust in me* upon it. I do; I will; and believe me always, for my part, your loving sweetheart,

ROBERT CHESNEY.

I promised to tell you everything—even if it should not be good news, as you have promised to tell me. Well, my new friend has a companion, who is not pleasant—a sullen brute of a fellow, with whom I may have some trouble; even he, however, has his good point—an unreasonable attachment to his master, such as I have never seen, except in step-father's dog *Fang*.

Robert had the pen of a ready writer, but this note took him long to compose; he was permitted by the nature of the case to say so little about his own adventures; and when he wrote of Lizzy, he had a way of lingering lovingly over the words, and even (as we have seen) of kissing them, which prolonged the process. He had done at last, however; and having addressed the letter to 'Lizzy Alston, Green Lane Gate, Windsor Park,' was about to get it posted, when he found his door had been locked on the outside. There was no bell in the room; indeed, his habits did not lead him to look for such; and he began to shake the door-handle and kick the panel.

'Hush, hush, in Heaven's name!' said the landlady's voice through the keyhole.

'I will not hush,' was the lad's angry reply; 'I will not be locked in, as though I were a spy and a liar.'

'Mr Murphy has gone out, and I suppose taken the key with him; he will be back soon, and shall open the door, I promise you. No honest lad shall be kept a prisoner in my house. In the meantime, what is it you want?'

'I want this letter posted.'

'Very good. Put it under the door.'

'Can I trust her?' thought Robert, hesitating.

'I will not deceive you, my good lad,' continued she, guessing the cause of the delay: 'I will put it into the box with my own hands.' She took the letter, and went down-stairs with it at once; as she did so, her eyes lit on the superscription, and a smile spread over her good-natured face. 'So he has a sweetheart, after all,' she murmured. 'What luck it is for her to have a lover as can write! It would be something, now that my poor dear Miles is with the saints, to have an old letter or two in his own hand to keep by one; but I could never teach him even the capitals.—Lor, Mr Murphy, how you frightened me! What is it?'

'Nothin', sweetheart; only, I want that letter;' and suiting the action to the word, Mr Kavanagh's henchman snatched it from her, and retreated backwards, holding it behind him, into the smoking-room, from which he had suddenly emerged.

Mrs Mulvaney's face grew two shades nearer scarlet than heretofore. 'Bad scan to you, you thief!' cried she, following him quickly into the room. 'Give me up that letter. Sweetheart, indeed! Your lips shall never touch Bridget Mulvaney's cheek again, if once you break that seal. I'll tell the young master what a mane sneak of a foster-brother he has.'

'Tush, tush! it's for his sake I do it, woman. Yon lad is new to us all, and we know nothin' of him. The master's in trouble—sore trouble, that I dare not speak of, even to yourself. How much less, then, should I trust a gossoon like that?'

'How came you to trust him at all, then?' inquired the widow incredulously. 'If he knows, he knows.'

'He knows something, and is in a position to tell it, which is more than he should have been if I had had my way: but you know what the young master is—if he takes a fancy to man or woman, all's out.'

'I believe the lad is as true as steel.'

'That's because you're a woman, and the young fellow is good-looking, like myself. Well, he may be steel, and yet, without knowing it, he may have

written something here which would bring Frank Kavanagh to the gallows.'

'The gallows!' cried the widow, with a shudder. 'Is it as bad as that, Mr Murphy? and not a spy nor a ganger in all England to excuse the matter.'

'That is so, Misthress Mulvaney; and you had best ask me no more questions. The point is this: though the lad up yonder knows nothing of the trouble, he knows of something that happened afterwards to a couple of dirty policemen that followed us on horseback.'

'Ah, the blackguards!' ejaculated the widow; 'bad luck to them.'

'Well, they hadn't good luck, and that's a fact,' said Murphy grimly; 'and if the lad has chanced to mention it to his friends, they may put two and two together, and find out more than he has. Besides, in his pride at staying at a private hotel, he may have written *Mulvaney's* at the top of the note, and it's very particular to keep our whereabouts dark for the present.'

'There's something in that,' assented the widow, won over, perhaps, no less by this complimentary reference to her establishment, than by his arguments. 'But you needn't have snatched the letter out of my hand like a footpad. Here; give it to me—for it's no more use to yourself than a mass-book to a monkey—and I'll read it out to you aloud.'

'You'll promise to read every word of it?' said Murphy, hesitating, and holding the letter high above his head; 'and not to hide anything, out of softness for the lad.'

'Yes, yes, I will,' answered the widow impatiently. Perhaps she was not altogether sorry thus to satisfy her own curiosity as to the contents of the young fellow's love-letter, under compulsion and without twinge of conscience; and Murphy put it into her hand.

'Ha, there's money in the seal!' cried she; 'and what a mane crature am I to meddle with it! He's sending his sweetheart a bit of gold, just as my Miles, when he was courting myself, once sent me half a sovereign on my birthday, only it was stolen in the post. "MY DARLING LIZZY," it begins, just as his did, saving my name was Bridget.—Now, Murphy, if there's anything particularly sweet in it, you must look another way, plaze, while I read it out. Now, silence, and be aisy, sir.' The last words had reference to a tender movement on the part of Mr Murphy, who had stolen his arm round her buxom waist, under the pretence (somewhat transparent, considering that he could not read) of commanding a full view of the letter. It was curious to watch the rapid change from excess of anger to the height of good-humour in these late antagonists, and the mutual friendliness that had taken the place of what had so lately threatened to be a very pretty quarrel.

*Little did I think, when I bade you good-bye last night, that I should have great news to tell you so soon.*

'There, didn't I say he was going to tell, the sneaking spalpeen!' ejaculated Murphy.

*I have met with a kind friend—whose name, for the present, you must be content to guess at—since he has reasons for its concealment.*

'There, you see!' cried the widow triumphantly: 'if you did say he was a-going to tell, Dick, you were a liar.'

'Well, any way, he's set a woman to guess at it,'

answered Murphy obstinately; 'and that's very nigh as bad as telling.'

*I cannot even give you my present address, for he is not at hand to give me leave to do so.*

'Come, what do you think of that, Murphy? Is he not the broth of a boy, and as true as I told you?'

'She'll be coming after him, and find it out,' argued the other, doubtfully. 'There was a Pagan woman as did that onst, from Palestine, as had no other address to go by beyond London. Nothing stops them.'

'Don't talk to me of your painted women, Mr Murphy.'

'Pagan, Misthress Mulvaney—Pagan,' explained Dick, apologetically. 'There's a song written about it, as the young master sings.'

'Then he ought to be ashamed of himself, and you for listening to him. Listen to *this*, sir, and learn a lesson in good behaviour from yon poor lad. How kindly he speaks of his Lizzy's mother, as is old and poor.' And she read the extract out approvingly.

'Sure, she isn't his mother-in-law *yet*,' observed Mr Murphy cunningly, 'or he would not speak of her that way. Now, it's one of the many merits as would make *yourself* a blessing to any man, that your mother (rest her soul!) is with the saints, and'—

'Be quiet, Dick, with your flattery, and let me seal up the gold again, and put the poor lad's letter into the post.'

'You are deceiving me, Bridget,' cried Murphy, with sudden seriousness; 'I can see it in your eye; you've not read out all he says.'

'Well, it's just the postscript, Dick,' explained the widow, with well-affected reluctance. 'There's nothing about the master in *that*, I do assure you.'

'I'm the best judge of that, Misthress Mulvaney, and I'll just tear the letter up from top to toe, unless I hear it; so, there.'

'Well, I promised to tell you everything,' writes he.'

'Ay, now it's coming!' said Murphy grimly; 'them lads as has learned to write puts the main thing in their postscripts, like the girls themselves.'

*I promised to tell you everything, even if it should not be good news. Well, my new friend (that's the young master, you know) has a companion, who is not so pleasant—a sullen brute of a fellow (this is you, Murphy), with whom I may have some trouble.*

'Well, that's like enough!' ejaculated Dick, with a great oath.

'Hush, hush, ye hathen!' said the widow rebukely; 'and only hear how he praises you afterwards.'

*Even he, however, has his good point (there's for you)—an unreasoning attachment to his master, such as I have never seen, except—except—*

'That's well, any ways,' exclaimed Murphy, complacently; 'and I'd like to know where he finds my equal in that respect.'

*Except in step-father's dog Fang.*

'The impudent young blackguard! does he say that?' exclaimed Murphy, scratching his shock head.

'Yes; indeed, he does, you omadhawn,' answered the widow, laughing heartily; 'and now you know what comes of prying into other folk's letters. It is you that have been listening to it all, and it's the listeners that never hears any good of



themselves. Come, light me a candle, Mr Fang, while I get the sealing-wax, and try to mend what never ought to have been broken.'

Doubtless, Mrs Mulvaney well knew the man with whom she was dealing, or she would have abstained from thus reminding him of Robert Chesney's sarcasm, even if she had not concealed it from him altogether; but the fact was, that Murphy was rather pleased than otherwise with the testimony that had been paid to the *one* virtue on which he plumed himself—his fidelity—though illustrated by so homely a metaphor, and regarded it with no increase of disfavour on account of it, but rather the reverse. A proof of this was immediately forthcoming in his giving up the key of Robert's attic to the widow, and bidding her tell him that (with the exception of the public room) he was free of the house, though forbidden to place his foot outside the door. This was not a great range of liberty; but unable, notwithstanding the fatigues of the previous night, to sleep, and tired of remaining in his own apartment, without the solace of a single book, the young fellow was glad enough to take advantage of it. Without being by any means afraid of the sturdy Irishman, he would not have sought his society had it been avoidable, and, on descending to the smoke-room, it was a relief to his mind to find it empty. The time, however, hung very heavily on his hands; he was used to the free air of the forest and an outdoor life, and the sense of confinement was almost unbearable. Mrs Mulvaney's stock of literature was limited to a Prophetic Almanac, and a work of Catholic devotion in the Latin tongue; so that he had really nothing to do but watch the company in the coffee-room from behind the curtains of the glass-door. They were a motley crew, and ranged from the mechanic in the receipt of good wages, down to the linenless wight who was spending his last copper in a go of whisky, but they were all of one type—that of Working (or pretending-to-work) Irish. They all seemed to know one another, and to be known to Mrs Mulvaney, who served them with her own hands, and had a word of friendly greeting for each of them.

She brought in Robert's own dinner at mid-day, but she did not dine with him; doubtless, Murphy had laid injunctions on her to the contrary. Later in the day, however, the former made his appearance, and, without any allusion to their previous disagreement, informed Chesney that he had seen Mr Kavanagh, who had made an appointment for them both to visit him on the ensuing day. Then Mrs Mulvaney joined them, and talked to Murphy about 'the boys,' whom, at first, Robert took to mean her children, but afterwards understood to be certain grown-up habitués of the establishment who had come under his own notice that day. In the evening, some of them returned, and were spoken with apart by Murphy; they were all of the more poverty-stricken class, and seemed to regard that gentleman with great respect, and receive what he had to say to them with assent and gratitude. About eight o'clock a curious incident happened. Murphy, Mrs Mulvaney, and Robert, were sitting at supper in the little room, when the hoarse voice of a broad-sheet seller was heard in the street.

'There's news of some sort,' observed the widow. 'Listen!'

'It's nothing,' said Murphy roughly, and making

an unnecessary clatter with his knife and fork. 'These fellows always tell a parcel of lies. If you were to buy his paper, it would be only money thrown away; there would be nothing in it.'

'Still, it can cost nothing to listen,' argued the widow. 'It's Murder. Hark!'

Her warning was unnecessary, for, urged either by an instinct of imitation, or by a curiosity that overwhelmed all other considerations, Murphy himself was now straining his ears to catch the fragmentary news.

'Horrible murder—murder in Buckinghamshire—murder and 'cide—horseback—mounted policemen.'

'What is it?' inquired Robert, rising eagerly from his chair. His ears were unused to the sing-song style of the street newsman, but the first words and the last had fallen on them distinctly enough.

'It is murder and suicide,' said the widow; 'but there was also something about folks on horseback. Here are some coppers: run out, my lad, and buy a copy.'

'Give them to me, and I'll buy it,' said Murphy, snatching at the money: 'a boy like that is sure to be made to pay twice as much as it is worth;' and he went out accordingly.

#### MANORIAL CUSTOMS.

CENTURIES ago, when Englishmen hunted native game capable of shewing fight, the royal forest of Rookwoode, in Buckinghamshire, harboured a terrible boar; as great a nuisance to the tenants of Chetwoode Manor as the famous dragon was to the good folks of Wantley. At length things came to such a pass, that the lord of the manor resolved to try conclusions with the lord of the forest; and after a combat of four hours' duration, slew him. When the king heard of the knight's exploit, His Majesty very much applauded what he had done, and rewarded the successful hunter by making him knight tenant *in capite*, constituting Chetwoode paramount manor of all manors within the forestal limits, and bestowing upon him and his heirs for ever the right of levying a toll on all cattle found within the liberty in the nine days from the 30th of October to the 7th of November.

The Rhyne toll, as it was called, was levied with peculiar ceremony. As soon as the sun rose upon the 30th of October, a horn was blown in front of Chetwoode manor-house, again in a field between Newton Parcell and Barton Hartshorne, for the third time at a place near the town of Finmere, Oxfordshire, and for the fourth time at a certain stone in Buckingham market-place, where the sum of sixpence was given to the poor. Then the proclaimers of the toll proceeded upon their way, blowing the horn at Thornborough Bridge, King's Bridge, Bridge Mill, and finally at the gate of the Lord's Pound in Chetwoode. This done, all 'foreign' cattle found within the limits were impounded until their owners paid a toll of twopence a mouth and one penny a foot for every beast. If not claimed, by payment of the fine, within three days, the manor bailiff blew a horn three times at the Pound Gate, and proclaimed that if any persons lacked any cattle therein, they were to come forward, describe the marks upon the same, and pay what was due, otherwise the said beasts became the lord's own as strays. In the present day, the toll is proclaimed on the Church Hill at

Buckingham at nine o'clock in the morning, the sounding of the horn being followed by a distribution of gingerbread and beer among the boys assembled for the occasion. The ceremony is repeated on the borders of Oxfordshire, and three collectors appointed to collect the toll of two shillings a score upon any cattle or swine passing along any road within the liberty until midnight of the 7th of November. The Rhyne toll used to be worth about twenty pounds a year, but the receipts became reduced to a fifth of that amount as soon as a railway appeared in the neighbourhood. In 1810, a large ditch-surrounded mound near Chetwode, known as the Boar's Pond, was levelled, and the skeleton of a large boar brought to light, which may or may not have been the veritable brute slain by brave Sir Ryalas.

Hugh d'Avranches, lord of Chester, granted that city the privilege of holding two fairs every year, whereat criminals of any degree might appear without fear of arrest. As a natural consequence, evil-doers of all sorts flocked to Chester at fair-time. Upon one such occasion, news came to Constable John Lacy that the Welsh were besieging the Earl of Chester's castle at Rhuddlan. Anxious to afford some help to the beleaguered earl, Lacy collected a mixed mob of travelling minstrels, careless ruffians, and wandering vagabonds, armed them with any weapons he could lay hands upon, and despatched them to Rhuddlan in all haste, under the command of Hugh Dutton. Great in numbers, if not otherwise formidable, their appearance was sufficient for the Welsh, who made off without testing the valour of the newcomers. In gratitude to Dutton for his timely and effectual assistance, the earl invested him and his heirs with jurisdiction over the minstrels of Cheshire. From this time, the minstrels were bound to do fealty to the lord of Dutton, upon St John the Baptist's Day, by appearing at his court in Eastgate Street, and tendering him four flagons of wine, and the sum of fourpence-halfpenny. The minstrels were collected by beat of drum, and when all were ready, formed into procession. A chosen band led the way, followed by a couple of richly arrayed trumpeters; then came the great body of jongleurs, their banner in their midst, and each man wearing a white napkin across his shoulders. These were followed by the steward of the manor, bearing his white wand of office; the herald; and the lord of Dutton, attended by the gentlemen of the county and city. Upon entering the church of St John the Baptist, the musicians knelt down, and played sundry sacred tunes of the period. Divine service followed, and, that over, the herald proclaimed: 'God save the King, the Queen, the Prince, and all the Royal Family; and the Honourable Sir Peter Dutton; long may he live, and support the honour of the Minstrel Court.' Returning to their starting-place, the company found a good dinner waiting their onslaught, to which justice was invariably done. In the afternoon, a jury was impanelled to try offenders accused of treason against the king or the Earl of Chester, minstrels guilty of practising without a license, or of not fulfilling its conditions. As soon as the jury had disposed of all cases brought before it, the court was closed, and the festival of the Chester minstrels came to an end. The last holding of the Court of Minstrels took place in 1756.

There was another Minstrels' Court held at Tutbury, which survived its fellow some twenty years, not receiving its quietus until 1778, having existed from the time of John of Gaunt.

King John, riding Alnwick way, managed to get stuck in a bog, and by way of keeping alive the memory of his mischance, decreed that, from that time forth, those who would be free of Alnwick Common should take a preparatory mud-bath. Early on the morning of St Mark's day, the candidates for the common freedom met the town chamberlains and the castle bailiff in Alnwick market-place; every man mounted, and attired in a white robe and night-cap, with his sword in his belt. Forming military fashion, they rode to the common; drawing rein and dismounting within a certain distance of a spot known as the Freemen's Well. At a given signal, every man dashed into the water, which was breast-high, and scrambled out on the other side. Wet garments were exchanged for dry ones, a welcome dram swallowed, horses mounted, and away they went full gallop round the boundaries of the district. Then, taking close order again, swords were drawn, and the cavalcade rode back to Alnwick, escorted into the town by garlanded girls, singing and dancing before them. A halt was called at the first new freeman's house they came to, easily distinguished by a large holly bush planted before the door. The man dropped out of the ranks, a dram was served round, and on the procession moved; going through the same ceremony until every new freeman had been seen safely, if not soberly, home. According to Camden, the tenants of the Essex lordship of Raleigh, having once upon a time met, at an unconscionably early hour, to plan some unseemly commotion, were compelled, in remembrance of their misbehaviour, to attend at cock-crow on the Wednesday after Michaelmas-day, on King's Hill, near Rochford, upon pain of being fined double the amount of their rent for every hour they were behind time. From the unlawful hour at which this curious meeting was held, it was termed Lawless Court, and all business transacted was done in a whisper, and recorded with the aid of a piece of coal; pens, ink, and candles being for the nonce prohibited articles. The freeholders of the town and manor of Lostwithiel were wont to assemble upon Little Easter Sunday, to ride together to church, led by one of their number, wearing a crown, bearing a sceptre, and having a great sword borne before him. At the churchyard stile the procession was solemnly received by the curate, who shewed them the way into church. Service over, the company departed as they had come, pulling up at an inn, where they stabled their steeds, and then sat down to dine; their leader taking the seat of honour, and being served 'with kneeling, assay, and all other rights due to the estate of a prince.' Carew, the Cornish historian, conjectures that the custom betokened the royalties appertaining to the honour of Cornwall, while admitting that 'the pedigree of this usage is derived from so many descents of ages, that the cause and author outreaches remembrance.'

The same might be said of other odd manorial customs, established, no doubt, to commemorate some event, but surviving all recollection of their origin. Nobody knows why the maids of Kidlington, Oxfordshire, on the Monday after Whitsuntide, had their thumbs tied behind them, and

raced after a lamb; she who succeeded in catching and holding it with her mouth, winning the title of Lady of the Lamb, and being installed mistress of the merrymakings. When caught, killed, and dressed with the skin hanging still to it, the lamb was tied to a pole, and carried before the Lady and her followers to the green, where every one footed it merrily until night set in. Next day, the lamb was partly boiled, partly roasted, partly baked, and served up at the Lady's Feast; and when the company had disposed of it, the 'solemnity,' that had nothing solemn about it, was at an end. If the young fellows of Coleshill, Warwickshire, were nimble or clever enough to catch a hare time enough to present it at the parsonage before ten o'clock on Easter Monday, the parson was obliged to give them a calf's head, a hundred of eggs, and a goat in exchange. Puss and parson were associated too in an Easter observance peculiar to Hallaton, Leicestershire; the rector having to provide two hare-pies, two dozen loaves, and a quantity of ale, to be scrambled for, in consideration of the benefit he derived from the Hare-crop Leys. The Leys were inclosed a hundred years ago, and another piece of land apportioned to the same purposes. We believe the custom is still continued under somewhat altered conditions. Every Easter Monday, the rector provides a basket, a sack, and two handless, stringless wooden bottles, holding about a gallon each. The basket is filled with penny loaves cut into quarters, the bottles with ale, and the sack with two large veal and bacon pies cut into pieces. Men, women, and children turn out and wend their way to Harepie bank, a bank with a small trench round it, and a circular hole in the centre. The loaves are scrambled for on the road, but the pies and the ale are jealously guarded until the bank is reached, when they are thrown into the hole, for all comers to try their fortune at a scrambling bout.

In 1375, Sir William Band was allowed to inclose twenty acres of land belonging to St Paul's, upon condition of presenting the clergy of the church with a fat buck and doe every year, upon the days of the Conversion and Commemoration of St Paul. The buck and doe were carried in procession to the high altar, where the dean and chapter, arrayed in copes and proper vestments, and wearing garlands of roses upon their heads, awaited their coming. The buck's body was sent to be baked; but the head and horns being fixed upon a pole, were carried before the cross, round about the church. On reaching the west door, the keeper 'blowed the death of the buck,' and was answered by sundry horns about the city. For their pains, the blowers received their dinner and three shillings and fourpence; the keeper, five shillings and a loaf of bread stamped with St Paul's image; and the bringers of the buck, twelve pence. Among the heirlooms belonging to Hilton House, Staffordshire, was the hollow brass image of a kneeling man, having a large aperture at the back, and a smaller one at the mouth. This effigy was a foot high, and known as Jack of Hilton. Upon New-year's Day, Jack was filled with water, and set by the hall fire, until getting up his steam, he blew it from his mouth in very audible fashion. Then the lord of the adjacent manor of Essington came into the hall with a live goose, which he drove round the fire three times, before carrying it into the kitchen to be dressed and cooked, when

he bore it to the table of the lord of Hilton, and received in return a dish of meat for his own dinner.

The lord of the manor of Lodebrook, Warwickshire, was by custom entitled to receive three-half-pence a year from every tenant for swarf-money, or, in case of default, thirty shillings and a white bull. In his account of the hundred of Knightlow in the same county, Dugdale says: 'There is also a certain rent due unto the lord of the hundred, called wroth-money, or warth-money, or swarf-money, probably the same with ward-penny. This rent must be paid every Martinmas-day, in the morning, at Knightlow Cross, before the sun riseth; the party paying it must go thrice about the cross and say, "The wroth-money," and then lay it in the hole of the said cross before good witness; for if it be not duly performed, the forfeiture is thirty shillings and a white bull.' This curious custom still exists. At the northern end of the village of Stretton-on-Dunsmore, near Rugby, upon an ancient British tumulus, stands the mortice-stone of the old cross of Knightlow, and here the wroth-silver is yet paid. A writer in the *Book of Days*, who witnessed the ceremony in 1862, says proceedings commenced by the landlord's agent reading out a notice requiring the payment to be made under penalty of 'twenty shillings for every penny, and a white bull with red ears and a red nose.' The names of the persons liable were then proclaimed, and each advancing in his turn threw his wroth-money into a large cavity in the stone, from which the attendant bailiff removed it; all parties concerned afterwards sitting down to a substantial breakfast at the expense of the lord of the manor. There is no record of the bull forfeiture ever having been exacted, but defaulters have, even in late years, had to pay the money penalty. If a drover crossing Halton Common, Cheshire, allowed one of his droves to help itself to so much as a thistle, the manorial lord claimed 'Thistle-take,' or one halfpenny for every beast under his charge. The lord of Wimbledon was entitled, upon a freeholder's death, to take possession of his best horse, his saddle and bridle, his spear and sword, his boots, spurs, and armour. A still more exorbitant claim was set up in the reign of Henry VII. by one Thomas Venables, who claimed that if he arrested any tenant of the lordship of Kinderton, Cheshire, for felony, and conviction followed, he, Venables, became entitled to all the felon's household furniture, besides other articles. The bailiff of Okeham still enjoys the privilege of exacting a horse-shoe from every baron of the realm at his first visit to the town, and never fails to enforce it.

The old lords of Exeter had an odd method of obtaining satisfaction when a tenant had neither money to pay his rents nor goods to be taken in distress. The landlord took a stone or 'some other dead thing' from the tenement, and produced it before the mayor and bailiffs of Exeter upon seven successive quarter-days. If at the seventh time the tenant did not shew with the money due, the landlord took possession of the property for a year and a day; did the debt remain unsettled at the expiration of that time, the freehold became the inalienable property of the landlord.

Some customs conferred extra privileges upon the tenants of the manors to which they were attached. Thus, the bondmen of Chakendon, Oxfordshire, upon performing the service of mowing

their lord's fields, could claim a ram worth not less than eightpence; and every mower received a halfpenny loaf, and his share of a fourpenny cheese, a cart-load of wood, and a certain quantity of grass and small-beer. The tenantry of Writtell had a right to all wood growing in what were called the Frample Fences, and as many poles or trees to repair their own fences as a man standing on the top of the ditch could reach with the helve of his axe. The townsfolk of Ensham, Oxfordshire, could, upon Whit-Monday, cut down as much timber—previously marked out by the churchwarden's giving the first chop—as could be drawn by men's hands into the abbey yard; and if they succeeded, despite the combined efforts of the servants of the abbey and of the manorial lord, in drawing it out of the yard again, it became their own, to use as they thought fit.

Widows of copyholders of Stockton, Dorsetshire, enjoyed the land of which their husbands died seised, as long as they chose to remain widows. At Braunston, Northamptonshire, it was necessary for the widow to appear at the manorial court next ensuing after her husband's death, and present a leathern purse containing a groat; this done, she might hold the copyhold herself as long as she lived, provided she did not fail to appear at the court once a year. Kenton, Devonshire, rejoiced in a valuable system of tenant-right, by which any tenement passed for three descents from father to son, became the property of the occupying family for ever. By the custom of Wareham, males and females shared alike in partitions of lands and tenements; by that of Middleton-Cheney, land descended to the nearest female relative; by that of Kennington, it went to the youngest son.

### SAVED BY HUMMING-BIRDS.

IN FOUR PARTS.—PART II.

As the *Stormy Petrel*, Royal West India mail-steamer, which was to bring out Ellen and her husband, was not to arrive at Carthagena until late in the ensuing month, I had plenty of time to occupy myself with the affairs of the mine, and with the singular personage who had so strangely introduced himself to me, and whose determination to go into partnership with me as regarded the working of the silver veins of El Viejo seemed rather to strengthen than to waver, as the days went by. I saw him frequently at home and abroad, and he never suffered me to forget his existence, so numerous were the quaint letters which he addressed to me, now accompanying some present of priceless Cuban cigars, the delicate tobacco of which was golden-hued and as thin as a rose-leaf; now despatched with a parcel of many coloured ores and metallic oxides. All these pithy documents were signed curtly: 'Yours, &c. N. B. Blurt;' but what the initials implied, unless it were Nota Bene or North Britain, which seemed improbable, I never knew until the day when I was introduced into Mr Blurt's domestic circle, when I learned that my new acquaintance had been christened by the resonant names of Napoleon Bonaparte.

This bustling, energetic specimen of the transatlantic Anglo-Saxon stock was married, although, on the occasion of our first meeting, his wife and children had not yet arrived from New Orleans.

Mrs Blurt I found to be a pretty little woman, with fair curls, round blue eyes, and a remarkable similarity to a wax-doll, so diminutive, passive, and apparently helpless was she. She seemed an ill-assorted mate for so restless a spirit as her ambitiously named husband; and, with her two children romping about her knees after the noisy fashion of Infant America, she looked so absurdly young and fragile, that I could scarcely realise her presence in the wild scenes to which Mr Blurt's anecdotes of bygone travel often referred.

'Saved all our scalps, I know that,' said the engineer, removing the cigar from between his bearded lips, one day when the conversation turned on the exceeding roughness of a residence among the Rocky Mountains, at least for ladies and children—'in Bloody Canyon, that was, south of James's Peak. Blackfoot Indians they were—the skunks; and they crept upon us so softly at our noon-day camping-place that three of us were down, riddled with arrows, before they raised the war-whoop. It was Kate's coolness, loading and handing up the spare rifles, that enabled us, after a tough bout, to keep the yelling brutes at bay. And I never knew, till all was over and safe, that she had been hurt, herself, in the wrist, quite early in the fight. I had to cut away the barb with a pen-knife, but you can see the mark plain enough still.'

As I liked Mr Blurt, as his testimonials gave positive proof of his scientific attainments and practical experience of mining, and as he was personally known to, and respected by, the United States' consul and other Americans of fair repute, I saw no reason why we should not come to terms, the rather that he possessed an amount of capital which would prove very useful in the re-opening of the abandoned mine.

'See here,' said my volunteer associate; 'I never waste words in a trade; always go straight to the point, and never employ agent or lawyer to speechify for me when I can hit the bull's-eye like an honest man. Your mine of El Viejo is a screamer. Ounce for ounce, I tell you fairly, the ore whips everything I know for richness, except three—one at Pike's Peak, one in Arizona, and one in Peru. There is gold along with the silver, to a percentage that it will pay to extract, though these lazy greasers could never do it, and I should have to get over a trained assayer from the States. The veins are thick, and trend beautifully, but the rock is too hard to be worked at a profit, much deeper down, in the hand-to-mouth Spanish way, like poultry scratching for wheat-grains. We must have good tools and good miners—pumping-engines, borers, and nitro-glycerine—all employed, if we are to get rich before we are gray. I have saved up seventeen thousand dollars, and I'll put every red cent into the concern, and direct the works myself, for an equal share in the profits; and if that offer does not prove that I'm in earnest, why, Mr Farley, you must be hard to please.'

I was pleased, and perhaps a little dazzled too, by the prospects of sudden and almost limitless wealth that were thus held out to me. Silver-mining in South America is by no means the flourishing industry that it was under the ruthless management of the Conquistadores, when it might truly be said that every bar and ingot of the precious metal that freighted the treasure galleons cost a ghastly price in the blood and toil of perishing myriads of the gentle Indian slaves. But



there were still famous properties in Chili, Bolivia, and Peru, that yielded semi-fabulous yearly revenues to their lucky possessors, and much of the colonial gossip had reference to immense fortunes thus amassed before the War of Liberation. Mining, too, had received a new impulse from the success of many of those undertakings, which the superior vigour of the Northern Americans had pushed to completion among the almost inaccessible fastnesses of the Rocky Mountain chain; and though my new friend's stories were as often of failure as of fruition, yet the statistics he laid before me shewed a large national balance of profit. We signed articles of partnership, and the preparations were pushed on with the feverish activity characteristic of Yankee enterprise.

At last the long-expected steamer was signalled in the offing, and hurrying to the wharf, I threw myself into the stern-sheets of the pilot-boat, and was soon on board the *Stormy Petrel*, and receiving the warm greetings of my sister and her husband. Beside them, as they advanced to meet me in the gangway, stood a young girl, so utterly unlike the Miss Foster of my fancy, that when Ellen said, smilingly: 'And here is Hetty—she and you know each other already, by report at anyrate,' I could scarcely believe my ears, and I am sure that I looked sheepish as I awkwardly took the little hand that was timidly held out to me. I have already traced the portrait—freckled, large-boned, and sandy-haired—of the Hetty of my imagination. The Hetty of real life was a small, slightly-made girl, with delicate features and bright complexion, red lips, and the darkest of dark hair and eyes, very pretty, very winning, and, emphatically, a lady. I saw a mischievous sparkle in my sister's eyes as she noted the effect that this first glimpse of Miss Foster had produced on me, and as she heard me mutter out some involuntary apology for the negligence of my attire, since it now for the first time occurred to me that my loose suit of 'butternut' country cloth, and Mexican boots of buff-coloured leather, stained and dusty from the long ride from El Viejo, were scarcely the component parts of the 'usual attire of a gentleman,' and that the pretty new-comer was not yet accustomed to the slovenliness of colonial ways.

There is no use in disguising the fact that I was soon very deeply in love with Henry Foster's charming sister, although I have always stoutly maintained, in opposition to Ellen, who has a feminine taste for the sentimental, that this attachment was not the Romeo and Juliet sort of affair that she insisted on considering it. But, seeing Hetty as I naturally did, very often, and being from the first on a footing of intimate friendship with her, I learned to value her as she deserved. In truth, a sweeter nature than hers could scarcely be met with anywhere; and as I witnessed daily proofs of her tender thoughtfulness for those around her, and noted how fresh and truthful was the gay good-humour of her youthful spirit, and how well she bore the unavoidable hardships of an imperfectly civilised country, I felt that to call her my wife would be to fill my cup of happiness to the brim.

All this while, however, I was far from being an idle man. Not only had I to share the labours of my partner, Mr N. B. Blurt, as concerned the mine; but the installing of the Fosters' in their new abode at Agnas Dulces, entailing, as it did,

the hiring of servants and farm-labourers, the transport of furniture and household gear by water or by roads of villainous character, and the purchase of implements and cattle, demanded no trifling outlay both of time and of money. As to the latter, however, there was no great difficulty, since a second application to Señor Bramah for a loan found that obliging Hebrew as accommodating as before; and indeed it seemed as if my credit had improved since my fortunes had been associated with those of Mr Blurt, who had brought with him to South America the undefined prestige which success only can confer. That he was a clever and experienced engineer, was beyond dispute, and that the large gains which more than one Western joint-stock company had realised, were, in the first instance, due to his clear-sighted judgment, was notorious. It was indeed equally true, that his exertions had hitherto failed to realise a fortune; but this was partly attributed to the versatile restlessness which often hinders his countrymen from garnering the fruits of their own astuteness; and partly, too, to the fact, that nepotism is a plant that flourishes even in the Great Republic. Napoleon Bonaparte Blurt did not belong to one of those moneyed families that, in America as in England, prefer to distribute their official patronage among their own kith and kin; and more than once, when a speculation was fairly on its legs, the zealous promoter of the enterprise had been shelved, in favour of some chairman's nephew, or of the son of an influential director, until, at length, he had resolved to try his luck elsewhere than in Arizona and Nevada.

A more attractive spot than Agnas Dulces, it would have been difficult to find—the pretty house gleaming snow-white through thickets of blossomed shrubs; the violet sea just fringing the horizon to the eastward; while to the west rose the mountains, of inconsiderable height, but graceful in form, and abounding in rocks of brilliantly contrasted hues; and away to right and left rolled the apparently illimitable forest, with its cane-brakes of vivid green, its solemn masses of primeval woodland, the silvery gleam of river and morass, and here and there a clearing, whence rose the lazy smoke as charcoal-burners plied their trade, or where roofs and walls, and fenced-in fields, told of gradual encroachments upon the wilderness. The dwelling stood sufficiently high to be beyond the reach of those terrible fevers that are the scourge of the low country; and the sea breeze and the mountain air combined to temper the sultry heats of the climate. The garden was large, and full of flowers and shrubs, mostly indigenous, though some were natives of Europe, and the rank luxuriance with which all vegetation flourished, had a sort of savage beauty of its own. The soil was indeed amazingly fertile, and although the local husbandry was of the rudest and most thriftless, the returns were almost always great. Maize and cocoa, sago and rice, maize and cotton, tobacco and pimento, were alike abundant, and the coffee-berries glistened among the glossy leaves in a profusion that reminded us of the holly of our English home.

Ellen's only regret, as she surveyed the new and pretty home of which she was to be mistress, was, that Aunt Jane, poor thing! had not lived to partake of the easy abundance of this transatlantic Land of Goshen. The spacious white-walled

quinta, with its cool verandah, and the welcome murmur of its umbrageous shade-trees, haunted by tawny swarms of the wild bee, must have appeared quite a palatial edifice to one long cramped within the narrow limits of Lilac Cottage, Havestock Hill. The coloured servants, indolent, picturesque, and good-humoured to an extent that disarmed the anger which their petty faults provoked, were, at anyrate, a welcome exchange from the chronic snappishness or sullenness of a London maid-of-all-work dissatisfied with her situation. Here, at Aguas Dulces, there was no need to pinch and scrape, and make minute calculations as to getting the fullest value for each sixpence invested in the poor marketing of a stinted household. Self-denial seemed out of place where Nature's bounty spread so plentiful a table for the refreshment of the hungry. Indeed, the very garden, where the bananas grew side by side with the fig-tree, and where the plantain offered bread ready made, in the midst of the agave and the lime, the star-apples and custard-apples, the guava and the prickly-pear, was in itself almost a sufficient provision for the wants of those who could be satisfied with simple fare. The woods were noisy with the cries of birds, the pigeon, the parrot, the deep-voiced toucan; and from the swamps at sunrise and nightfall came the clang of wild-fowls' wings, as squadron upon squadron sallied forth to forage among the salt marshes of the coast, or flew back to their roosting-places among the impenetrable reed-beds.

Henry, who was, in spite of his City experiences, somewhat of an enthusiast in agriculture, could not fail to appreciate the excessive richness of the soil. He said, laughing, that it was impossible in such a place to earn the reputation of a good farmer, since to scratch the ground was enough to enable the veriest sloven to raise repeated crops; and he was already looking forward to cultivating Sea Island cotton of the finest staple, coffee of superior flavour, and such gigantic maize as Colombia had never seen, by merely doing justice to the natural merits of his land. But his farm-hands were sad stumbling-blocks in the path of an improver. Triptolemus Yellowley himself could not have been more sorely exercised by the shortcomings of the Shetlanders, than my brother-in-law by those of the copper-coloured denizens of his American Arcadia. Not that his peons were, in the common sense of the word, hard to manage. The docile creatures betrayed none of the vices, and few of the merits, of European toilers. They were neither insubordinate nor addicted to drink, and were only too content with the poor hire which repaid their industry. But what with saints' days, family festivals, and irregular holidays occasioned by some local superstition, their working year was lamentably short, while neither bribes nor rating would persuade them to throw an extra amount of energy into their daily task. The offer of higher wages for better work was wasted upon them; and I could not forbear laughing when Foster, growing impatient, seized a spade, and tried to shame his dark retainers by shewing them how to dig with a will, so genuine was the languid amazement with which they watched 'Master's' voluntary exertions. Still, some progress was made, and it was evident that Aguas Dulces would prove a paying investment.

The great interest of the hour, however, concentrated itself on the silver mine of El Viejo, where

the new works were being pushed on with a rapidity wholly due to the fiery activity of my partner. Mr Blurt was really indefatigable, contenting himself with the shortest possible allowance of sleep, dining cheerfully on a ship's biscuit and a morsel of charqui, and ignoring rest during his wakeful hours as completely as if he had been no man of nerves and muscles, but some cunningly constructed automaton of wrought-iron. He made frequent journeys between Carthagena and the mountains; and although my wild Guachos began by ridiculing the American's ungraceful horsemanship, they soon learned to respect the manliness which made him indifferent to hunger and thirst, to sun and to exhaustion, and 'Don Blurt' became a popular personage.

It was no light task which my partner had undertaken. Machinery had to be imported, borne piecemeal on the backs of mules along rugged roads, and put together in a country where skilled artisans were rare, where the distances were great, and the means of transport insufficient, and where none of the natives, white or brown, red or black, could easily be brought to comprehend the value of time, or to see the advantage of performing to-day what could be put off till the morrow. Then it was necessary to organise the local labour, such as it was, to get the Indian miners to work harmoniously with the trained men whom high pay had allured from the United States into our employment, regular Dugald Dalgetties of the pick and cradle, who were ready to obey the hests of any capitalist with dollars at his disposal, but who were often rough and surly of mood, and prone to domineer too insolently over the meek race of indigenous toilers. To establish some sort of discipline and good order among these heterogeneous elements—to get the machinery into working condition, and to secure a supply of provisions and fuel for the steam-engines—to provide timber for props and shoring to lay down wooden tramways—and to build sheds, construct ladders, and improvise a storehouse impervious to white-ants or two-legged pilferers, required in such a land not merely constant exertion, but a considerable outlay; and although, at the first outset, Blurt, in his own phrase, luckily 'happened upon' silver, and sold six hundred ounces of rich ore to a dealer in Carthagena, there was a perpetual drain on our resources, and I was repeatedly compelled to have recourse to the good offices of Señor Bramah, the money-lender of Carthagena. My early repugnance to this method of raising cash on mortgage was a good deal deadened by habit; and, after all, it was not as if I were some spendthrift who wanted the advances for some frivolous object of self-indulgence.

The re-opening of El Viejo was considered in some respects as a national event, and when we brought down the first instalment of silver ore to the coast, guns were fired, and rockets discharged at Carthagena, and the dark-eyed young doñas, at ball and tertulia, smiled their sweetest on the English master of all this prospective wealth; while sundry offers to take shares in the concern were pressed upon me by men of undoubted opulence. All these proffers, by Blurt's advice, were politely declined. 'I know pretty well,' he said, in his quaint way, 'what comes of it when poor men, just as the cake is baking, agree to divide it with rich men who would have seen them

barbecued like a pickerel before they had helped to knead the dough. No, no, Mr Farley; you and I have lassoed the horse and saddled him too, and we may as well ride the critter ourselves, I guess. Much obliged; but we'll soon have capital of our own, as sure as my name is Napoleon Bonaparte Blurt.

Immediately after which conversation my zealous associate returned to El Viejo, making me promise to follow him in two days at farthest.

'You talk better Spanish than I do,' he said, as we shook hands on the threshold; 'and you have more patience with the tawny loafers than I can find it in me to shew. I can deal with wood, stone, and iron pretty smart; and I know to an ounce what I can get in the way of work out of an Irish navy or a black stevedore, but these tame Indians are a puzzle to me. How you manage them, I cannot tell.'

'Ah!' said I, smiling, 'you forget Tlatzo. He is my talisman, where his countrymen are concerned.'

It may be as well briefly to explain who Tlatzo was. Shortly after my arrival in South America, I had taken passage in a coasting-craft bound for the port of Caracas, where I wished to recover certain debts due to my late uncle's estate. The vessel, a three-masted felucca, was indeed my property, but she had been chartered by Mr Gudge, for two years, to the merchant-skipper who commanded her, so that I was really on the footing of an ordinary passenger. The craft was called the *Saucy Molly*, and was manned by a scratch crew of Yankees, Mexicans, and English sailors—these last the worst specimens of forecastle Jacks that I ever saw; and indeed the whole ship's company was of a dubious quality, and would have been more at home on board a slaver or a pirate than on the decks of a respectable merchantman. The captain, Kit Benson, was worthy of his crew; and indeed such a mutinous, rum-loving, troublesome set of skulkers could not have been kept to their duty by mild means. The gentlest persuasions of Captain Benson were knock-down blows of his brass knuckledusters; and in case of need, he and his mate were ready to enforce their authority by revolver and bowie-knife. This redoubtable Kit, a Texan by birth, and a giant in stature, was very frank in his estimate of his subordinates.

'All very well,' he would say, 'for your long-voyage skippers, in their floating tea-wagons bound to China or Calcutta, to hire a set of decent, go-to-meeting Jack Goodboys of seamen. In the coasting-trade, we have to take up with rascally deserters, chaps that never pull at a rope if an officer don't keep his eye on the slack of it, and that would cut their own brother's throat for a noggin of whisky. I am the biggest blackguard of the lot, but I choose to work the ship, and I can manage the others, and those afloat with me may just sink or swim.'

Rounding Point Gallinas in this delectable company, we came in sight of a whole fleet of Indian fishermen, plying net and scoop among the silvery shoals of some herring-like fish, at the entrance of the great salt-water lake of Maracaybo. There was a heaving ground-swell; and some signs of foul weather approaching had probably been detected by the quick eyes of the natives, for their periaguas and double-canoes were already speeding shorewards under press of sail and paddle. To seaward a cloud-bank was gathering, and there

was every prospect of a squall and a rough sea; but with the skilful seamanship of Kit Benson, and the strength and trim of the *Saucy Molly*, there was scanty cause for fear. It was otherwise with the Indian craft, only built for smooth seas and light winds; but they were fast hurrying off, when we came in sight, beside a wave-worn rock that rose, steep and slippery as a half-submerged steeple, from the heaving water, of a small canoe that held but two fishers, a gray-haired old man and a boy. These, bending forward, and hauling at a net heavy with fish, had not perceived us as we drew near, when—whether through negligence or wanton malignity on the part of the helmsman will never be known until the Judgment Day—the felucca ran down their frail bark, cutting it in two as the stroke of a knife severs the rind of an orange, and sending both its occupants headlong into the waves. The old man was never seen again. He had been stunned or injured, most likely, by the fore-part of the felucca as it crushed down his fragile boat, and so perished. But the boy—he was a slender lad of some thirteen or fourteen years of age, with long hair, straight and dark, like that of all his race—rose unhurt, and swam swiftly after us, so that, as the felucca yawed from her course, he came near enough to grasp a rope dangling from the gangway, and tried to scramble on board. A sailor bent over the gunwale, and roughly thrust the boy back into the water; but still he continued to follow, gazing up at us with his bright, beseeching eyes, and calling out a word or two in broken Spanish. The men—I almost hesitate to call them so, brutes that they were—jeered and scoffed at the efforts of the drowning boy, and twice stimulated him to fruitless efforts by throwing him a rope, and dragging it away as he essayed to grasp it. At first I hardly realised the full inhumanity of their intentions; but when I did expostulate, they merely laughed.

'Leave the lad to perish—and why not, mister?' tartly demanded the mate: 'guess he's only a tarnation copper-skinned Injun. Let him drown, and a good riddance.' Meanwhile the boy swam superbly, and I was just turning to call Captain Benson from his cabin, in hopes of prevailing on him to cause his crew to suspend their cruel sport, when one of the sailors exclaimed: 'Avast; there's a chap giving chase that won't make much of the nigger, body and bones.' And following the direction of his pointing finger, I could distinguish a shark's back fin, black and menacing as Death's own banner, rising above the blue water, and moving relentlessly in pursuit of the swimmer.

I could myself swim well, and in the hurry and agitation of the moment, I jumped overboard, and struck out for the place where the Indian boy was, as yet unconscious of his danger, while I shouted aloud to frighten the cowardly and ferocious enemy, that was stealthily approaching him, and as good-luck would have it, Captain Benson just then came on deck. The skipper's humanity was no whit better than that of his precious crew; and I have no doubt that he and his would have watched the water redden with blood, with the same amused curiosity with which children often observe a cat crunching the bones of a mouse; but there was a difference between a nameless native boy and Mr Farley, owner of the *Saucy Molly*, and the end of it was that the lad and I, as I refused to be separated from him,



were hauled on board the felucca, while the disappointed shark, gleaming silvery under our counter, swam after us for half an hour or more. From that time forth, Tlatzo—that was the name of the Indian boy—became my body-servant, faithful friend, and almost shadow, so complete was the manner in which his simple, loyal nature identified itself with the interests of the white man who had preserved his life. He was, as I believe, an orphan, and I never quite understood the degree of relationship in which he stood to the old Indian who had been drowned when the canoe sank beneath our vessel's keel. At anyrate, Tlatzo begged to be allowed to follow my fortunes, and a trustier retainer no man ever had. He belonged to some tribe less warlike than the fierce Caribs who once lorded it over the sea-coast of his country, but with all his docility and affectionate disposition he was only half a 'tame Indian.' He was skilled in forest-lore, and was never so happy as when teaching me to find game in the woods, or when commissioned to stock the larder with bird and fish, for, indeed, his dexterity with spear, bow, and blow-pipe was remarkable.

But Tlatzo's main utility lay in the influence which he possessed over his fellow-countrymen employed in the mine. He was, I believe, the son of a chief or man of some hereditary rank, and, as a member of a semi-independent tribe, was respected by the Indios Manzors, or 'tame Indians' of the interior, whose necks had long been bowed to the yoke of their Spanish tyrants. Tlatzo's grateful fondness for his master often stood me in good stead with our timid and suspicious labourers; and, indeed, though I knew it not, the hour was soon to come when Tlatzo and I should have to change places, as preserver and preserved.

#### A DROLLERY IN MEDICAL PRACTICE.

EVER since the detection of 'Scratching Fanny,' who ingeniously imposed upon all and sundry as the 'Cock-Lane Ghost,' the skill of young females in playing off tricks, and simulating maladies, out of a spirit of mere mischief, often to their own detriment, has been a well-recognised fact in the medical profession. In such performances, boys fall far behind. Miraculous wounds, or miraculous cures, do not suit the boyish nature. Girls possess the true inventive faculty and power of endurance for some secret purpose. Yet, with a full knowledge of these qualities in the young female patient, physicians are constantly imposed on; and for that matter, magistrates too, as, for example, when, as has occurred, some young lady sustains a fanciful complaint of being improperly treated in a railway-carriage.

Long ago, when almost everything unusual was ascribed to supernatural interference, clever young females, with a relish for deception, resorted to a very pretty knack of astonishing simple-minded people, by making mysterious noises, scratchings, tumbling about articles of household furniture, throwing stones at windows, deranging flower-pots, and performing other outrageous antics. In that delightfully amusing old book, *Satan's Invisible World Discovered*, we have a variety of incidents, all assumedly supernatural, and very perplexing to the ecclesiastical authorities of the period, but which a sharp London detective would

now have at once traced to some clever but very innocent-looking girl, who enjoyed the exquisite pleasure of throwing a whole neighbourhood into that state of utter consternation which resulted in an appeal to prayers and exorcisms. A love of deception by such freaks sometimes exceeds all imaginable bounds. Self-accusation, and even self-torture, are well-known phases of this curious disorder of the female mind, for such it really is.

A story is told of a lady patient who was in the habit of thrusting needles into her foot, and then submitting to a surgical operation for their removal. But this instance of self-inflicted torture was far outdone in a curious case which occurred at the Carlisle Infirmary, and is mentioned by Dr Priestley in a lecture delivered at the Middlesex Hospital. We popularise it as follows:

One day a young woman applied at the infirmary to be treated for an ulcer having a very ugly appearance, and which was spreading at a great rate. Suspecting that the patient was secretly causing the irritation, the doctor in attendance caused the part to be covered in such a way that she could not get at it. The result was that, by a course of simple treatment, the sore was speedily healed. The girl did not like getting well. In a short time she tried a new trick. This was the contrivance of a gathering at the end of her finger, leading to the bone—a seemingly bad case, necessitating a surgical operation. To this she would on no account consent, and left the infirmary. She afterwards, however, went to Liverpool, and there submitted to an amputation of part of the finger. Taking care that the wound should not heal, the case became so bad that the hand had to be amputated. This did not satisfy the morbid desire for suffering. Still she kept the wound in a state of irritation, and amputation above the elbow was resorted to. With the stump nearly healed, she quitted Liverpool, and returned to Carlisle, where by-and-by the wound ulcerated, and she was again admitted to the infirmary. Again an amputation—this time, the arm off by the shoulder-blade. The poor wretch was still unsatisfied. After being a little time at home, she presented herself with the wound in a bad way; at the same time producing two pieces of bone as having come away, but which the doctor saw were only two pieces of bone that had been taken from a leg of mutton. To prevent any fresh manoeuvre, she was placed in bed with her remaining arm tied to her side, and in three weeks the shoulder was perfectly healed. Now about to be discharged, she fell on a new device. Her left eye appeared to be badly swollen, and on inspection it was found that she had picked a piece of lime plaster from the wall, and placed it under the eyelid! Dismissed from the infirmary, she afterwards affected a new malady, but was looked on with suspicion, and died without admitting her deceptions to any one. The girl who perpetrated these oddities is not spoken of as having been insane, and the medical man who relates the case says that her motives for self-torture are not to be divined. The only rational conjecture is, that she derived a pleasure in successfully playing off these ridiculous tricks on her medical attendants.

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